

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

May 14, 1999

LB 652, 878

(Legislative Journal page 1441.)

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Thompson, would you like to bring us up to date on the position the bill is in at this point in time? Thank you.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you very much. This bill, as you may recall, is a combination of three bills. The first bill, which is the title of the bill, dealt with some very needed improvements that needed to happen at our rehabilitation and treatment centers at Kearney and Geneva. We spent a great deal of time talking about the condition of those facilities, the importance of bringing them up to design standards, of dealing with some very critical safety issues, and also studying the program and staffing needs of those facilities. Through the efforts of this body on LB 878, we were able to add money to the mainline budget bill for capital construction to begin to address some of those critical needs that are occurring at the facilities, so that takes away the need to debate the first part of the bill, which was to raise the cigarette tax to pay for those improvements. The agreement that day and the subsequent amendment to the mainline budget bill addressed those needs and I thank the body for making that a priority in our state government this year. I think that speaks very well of the fact that we have identified that as a priority, recognized it, and taken action. If we don't take action on it this year, we're going to have to wait till the next biennium budget and the issues are critical. And for any of you that day who may not have had all the information, I know I passed out a number of things and I just wanted to let you know I have very detailed information on all of those projects, some...even some schematic drawings, that are available in my office if you want to add that to the material you already have in making that decision. But I appreciate the commitment that was made and appreciate the work of so many senators who helped make that happen that day. The second part of the bill dealt with secure confinement. Originally, it was a bill of Senator Dwite Pedersen to take back a facility that was originally designed for use by the juvenile justice system and the adult correction system for youth offenders. A decision was made two years ago to make that an adult facility only, and we had some discussion on a second...a second time during our agenda on the needs for secure